



[V I Lenin, 1870 – 1924](#)

Lenin's Encyclopaedia entry on Marx

The attached item today is Lenin's "Biographical Sketch and Exposition" of Karl Marx, written and first published as an encyclopaedia entry. It has all the hallmarks of Lenin's precision of style, being concise and concrete, but it also has traces of the worst side of Lenin's didacticism, almost to the point of dogma. "*Marxism is the system of Marx's views and teachings,*" writes Lenin, cheerfully beginning a section headed "The Marxist Doctrine". The next section is called "Marx's Economic Doctrine".

But Marx did not write economics, and he didn't write "doctrine" of any kind.

We will be dealing with such un-Marx-like formulations as "Marx's Economic Doctrine" in later parts of this course.

Lenin was the greatest practical revolutionist in history, to date, but he was not the greatest philosopher. Karl Marx was the greatest philosopher, to date, and Marx stood on the shoulders of Hegel.

Lenin was one of hundreds of millions of followers of Marx. All of them have struggled to understand Marx. Lenin wrote, also in 1914:

“It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!”

Lenin's long book on philosophy is called [“Materialism and Empirio-Criticism”](#) (1909).

The main downloadable document is an outstanding summary of Karl Marx's life and work. A large portion of it is about philosophy. Do not be put off by any reservations that may have been expressed above. This text is a “must read”, in any case, as well as being a significant part of this course.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Karl Marx, Biographical Sketch and Exposition, 1914, Lenin.](#)
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